

Marriage Recovery **FAILED TRUST EARNED**

“I don’t know what to do. I’m not certain I can trust my partner. He/She did not do what they said they would do and now he/she treats it like I just don’t understand. I don’t know if I should trust him/her again.”

Trust is NOT something that you are born with or inherit nor is it just part of your character. Trust is not something you either have or do not have! Such ideas put too much pressure on trust.

When your teenager says, “What do you mean I have to call you if I change where I am going? Don’t you trust me?” do not bite the bait.

Trust does not have to be all or nothing. You can trust in one area and not yet have seen behavior that earns your trust in another area. Trust is NEVER universally offered. It makes much more sense to offer trust in degrees based upon behavior promised and kept. In fact trust needs to ALWAYS be a very specific topic. No universal trust. Tell me what the specific behavior is and we will decide trust based upon earned behavior.

Trust comes in two flavors: MOTIVE and ABILITY. You can trust me to do something that I, personally, have a motive for doing as I promise. That does not mean you can trust me to do something you think I must do unless I also agree it must be done.

The focus of trust is around the **issue**, not around the **person**. When trust is not present (sometimes because we have broken trust) we need to regain or earn that trust by doing what we say we are going to do. When you start earning trust or regaining trust you have to start with small trust issues. Do not set the bar too high. Start by trusting the other person in

the one thing you are now talking about attempting to trust them in and do it at this very moment. You are NOT going to start out by trusting someone in all things. You are going to start by trusting the other person in the one thing you are now discussing.

You have to feel safe in making this attempt to earn and give trust. To do that bring up your concerns about what is going to happen. “I understand you are going to call me if you are not going to get home by six.” You might then ask, “What are the risks that you will not make it by six?” If the other person plays games, that is, cannot talk about it reasonably, call them on it as a non-trust arrangement.

Warning: don’t use your mistrust as a club to punish your partner. If they have not been mistrustful in one area, don’t let the mistrust bleed over into all areas of their character. If you keep telling stories of the other person’s untrustworthiness, they will act in ways less worthy of your trust. You will start up a self-defeating cycle and get more of what you **do not** want.

Lewis R. Bigler, M. Div, MA, AAPC Diplomate
Family/Couple/Individual
Counselor/Mediator
Licensed Mental Health Counselor
4476 Main Street,
Suite 204 Snyder Square
Amherst, New York, 14226
716.634.0658
www.Biglercounseling.com